LowellSTAT Report
May 2013
Subject: Traffic Accidents

There has been a cluster of accidents involving pedestrians around the downtown area. During the years 2010, 2011, and 2012, there were **573** calls to the Lowell Police Department (LPD) for pedestrian accidents. The map in **Figure 1** is from the 2012 MassDOT Top Crash Locations Report, which is issued to evaluate top crash intersection locations and top crash pedestrian locations in order to improve the safety of our roadway system. As marked by the yellow circles on the map, the highest concentrations of pedestrian accidents are located at **Bridge St. and 3rd St**. and **Merrimack and John St**. The Equivalent Property Damage Only (EPDO) method is a system of ranking intersections by MassDOT, in terms of safety. The method takes into account the total number of crashes at a location and the severity of each crash by assigning points to damages.

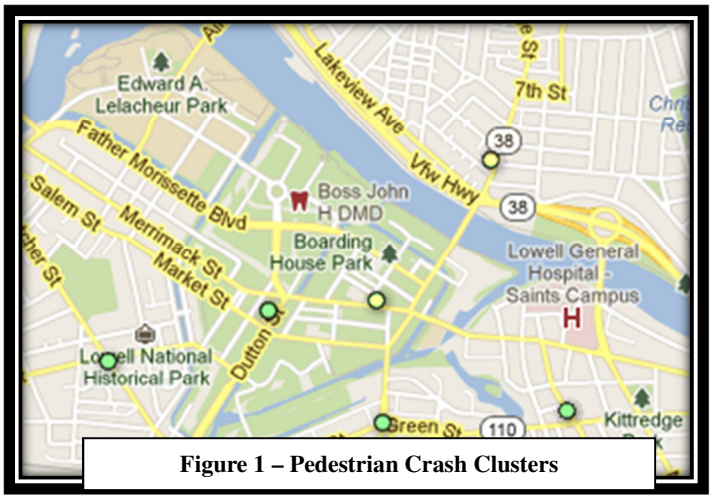

Figure 1 – Pedestrian Crash Clusters

In our May STAT meeting, several explanations were proposed for the downtown pedestrian accidents, including the following:

- Drivers caught in traffic delays downtown tend to accelerate rapidly as soon as they are freed from gridlock.
- Crosswalks are not visible enough to attract all pedestrians.
- The fine for Jaywalking under State Law is only $1 per offense. (MA GL Ch. 90 §18A)

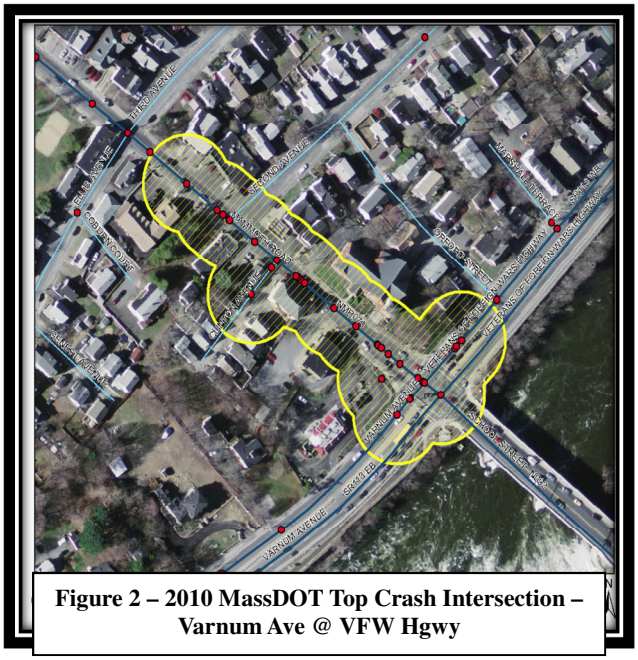

Figure 2 – 2010 MassDOT Top Crash Intersection – Varnum Ave @ VFW Hgwy

The EPDO method is currently used by MassDOT in its development of the Top 1,000 Crash Locations in the State of Massachusetts. Three of the top ten worst locations in the state are located in Lowell, including the number 1 and 2 locations. **Figure** 2 shows a detail of the number one location at **Varnum Ave. and the V.F.W. Highway.** However, since this listing in 2010, traffic accidents throughout the city have decreased **3%** from the year 2011 to 2012, and there has been an **18% overall decrease** since 2003. This improvement in safety on the roads can be attributed directly to LPD's use of revenue from traffic citations to bolster traffic enforcement details. LPD positions these details strategically, based on citizen complaints, school crossing guard complaints, and utilizing mapping that combines crime intensity and accident occurance data.